

viewpoint leads Jones to a rejection or incomplete acceptance of some of the writer's major novels, *The Idiot* in particular, which work Jones considers an outright failure. It is precisely in *The Idiot* that a Christian sensibility converts the apparent inconsistencies and shortcomings in the figure of Prince Myshkin into deep truths. "A Christian cannot but fail" (*der Christ muß scheitern*) said Walter Nigg, one of the most perceptive critics of that novel. Jones refuses to see that Dostoevsky's intent to deliver a Christian message molds the entire structure of his novels, causing him to introduce throughout *Crime and Punishment* a wealth of detail pointing toward the Epilogue, or to begin discrediting Ivan Karamazov from the very beginning of the novel, and quite systematically so.

Altogether then, Jones's dialogue with Dostoevsky is somewhat too personal and too idiosyncratic to engage a reader whose frame of mind is different from his. This is a book in which a careful and sympathetic reader may find some gold, but it is not easy to mine.

Kurt J. Fickert

*FRANZ KAFKA, LIFE, WORK, AND CRITICISM.*

Authoritative Studies in World Literature.

Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1984. Pp. 42. \$6.95

Reviewed by Adèle Bloch

This booklet is divided in five main parts: The first one is a short biography of Franz Kafka, the second is a chronological list of his work, and the third offers his main themes and summaries of his writings, the fourth section is an evaluation of his works, the last one is a bibliography followed by seven pages of notes and an index. This cursory study is part of the series *Authoritative Studies in World Literature*. As it states on the cover, it is designed as a research tool for "students of literature and young scholars."

If we bear this purpose in mind, we can accept the necessarily summary aspect of this pamphlet. Professor Fickert presents a succinct, streamlined but interesting introduction to Kafka's personality, life, ideas and a résumé of his works. The biography, which is condensed into five pages, provides a glimpse into the salient episodes of a rather uneventful life. The uninitiated reader is given an insight into conflict between Kafka's artistic vocation and his bourgeois milieu dominated by a stern unappreciative father. The third part, which covers seven pages, provides an overview of Kafka's short stories and novels, and the fourth, which is devoted to a critical insight into Kafka's work, comprises only four pages. It presents the main theories held by noted critics such as Neider and Politzer, who stress the Oedipal fixation, Max Brod who emphasizes the religious elements, and finally Dr. Fickert himself who interprets the Kafkaesque symbols and metaphors as keys to the artist's creative dilemma fraught with autobiographical tones. Professor Fickert throughout this study underlines the symbolism of the proper names and titles which always refer back to Kafka himself. The final annotated bibliography, which covers six pages, contains an assessment of all the listed critical works.

If we read the editor's explanation, we can understand why such a study must by nature be so condensed and laconic. The series is destined to be a "succinct and inexpensive research tool" and to point out to students or libraries the relevance or desirability of certain works, which can be ordered or rejected. Somehow, this reader, while appreciating Dr. Fickert's clarity of presentation and success in weeding out the bare essentials, felt the frustration that scholar must have experienced in compressing such a wealth of material into such few pages. One can admire the results if one considers the restrictions imposed by the format. Perhaps in the case of a writer of Kafka's stature, it might be better for an untutored student to be exposed to some short stories from the *Penal Colony*, for example, and let the author give a taste of his own prose. Dr. Fickert himself repeatedly insists that Kafka's total literary output is hardly voluminous!

If we bear these restrictive features in mind, this outline is a fine guide to literature, especially for undergraduate students. Its digest-like quality also should recommend it to librarians.